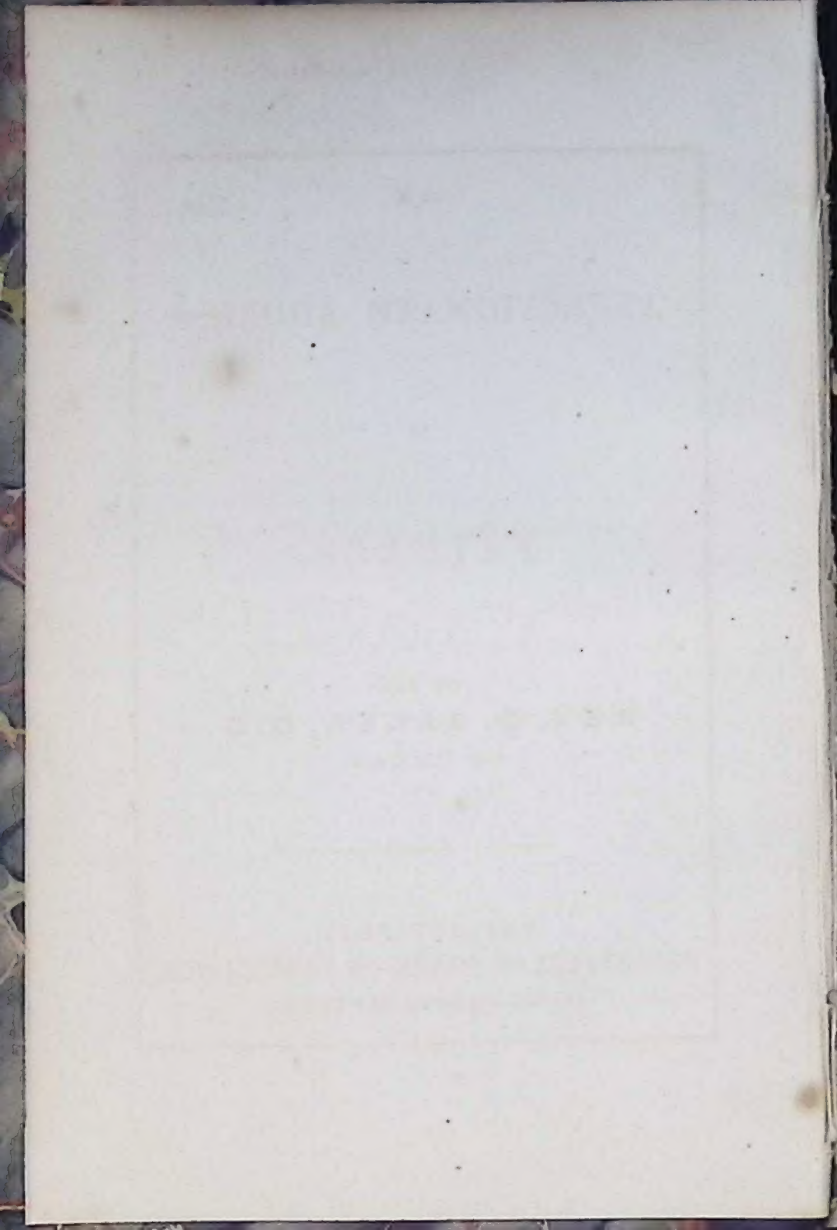


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AN  
AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS  
TO  
FATHERS.

BY THE  
REV. D. BAKER, D.D.  
OF TEXAS.

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AN AFFECTIONATE  
ADDRESS  
TO FATHERS.

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FATHERS! this address is to you. Read it, and ponder what I say; and God grant it may prove a blessing to yourselves, and the dear children whom you love.

I am a man of some observation; and, if I mistake not, one great evil of the day, is a TOO GENERAL NEGLECT OF PARENTAL DUTY. Many parents are not happy in the government of their children. They do not train up their children in the way in which they should go. Unquestionably, the responsibility of the mother is great, but responsi-

bility does not attach to her alone. It rests upon the other parent also ; and, particularly in regard to boys, who very soon begin to need a stronger arm than that of a mother, and an eye, that can look beyond the precincts of the nursery. It is no uncommon thing, to hear complaints coming from colleges and other seminaries of learning, that certain boys are not easily governed ; and indeed, before sent to such institutions, complaints are made about their rudeness in our streets, at our church doors, and even in the house of God ! The impression is, that there is something wrong at home. And it is but too true that, in many cases, through weakness, or overweening love, or pure neglect, children are permitted to rule their parents, when, according to Heaven's appointment, parents should rule them. Having occasionally been behind the curtain, I speak understandingly, when I say, that the *mother* is

not the only one, wanting in parental duty. The *father* is wanting too, but he pleads in his own behalf, that he has other matters to attend to. He must make money; he must provide for his family; and, therefore, must leave the whole control and management of the children to the *mother*. I knew the case of a professional gentleman, who was a learned man, a minister of the gospel, and one of the most amiable men I ever knew, in all my life. He had no time, as he thought, to attend to certain sons of his who were becoming very rude and lawless. He left the entire management of them to his wife; but she had no *tact*—she had no energy. The result was, that, notwithstanding the piety, and the polish of the parents, those boys grew up perfect rowdies! One died a horrid death; and another, at the present time, seems to be going on to a miserable eternity, as rapidly as the wheels of time can carry

him! But this reminds me of a case upon sacred record, which I wish to hold up prominently in this address.

#### THE CASE OF ELI.

THIS case is melancholy, yet full of instruction; and, whilst there is a parent upon earth, it will sound an alarm, which must and will be heard. Eli was High Priest; and was, upon the whole, a good man. But in one thing, he was much to be blamed. *He neglected parental duty.*—According to the historian, “his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Bending under the load of age, this good, but too indulgent parent, had retired from the active duties of the priesthood. These duties devolved upon his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. But, alas! they were sons of Belial! for, although ministering, as priests, in the service of the

Lord, they were guilty of the most shameful immoralities! Indeed their conduct was so vile, and abominable, that not only did they bring disgrace upon their office, but, on their account, "men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Eli was, probably, not an eye-witness of his sons' immoralities, but he was not ignorant of them; for, we are told, that "he heard all that his sons did to all Israel," but he restrained them not. It is true, that he did not pass the matter over, in utter silence. No, he reasoned, and expostulated, and even gently reproved them, saying, "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people. Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear of you. Ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but, if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Thus he gently *reproved*, but "*restrained them*

*not.*" This was not enough. The sins of the young men were very great. They called for stronger measures. The old man ought to have rebuked them sharply. He ought to have exerted his authority, and put these sons of Belial out of the priesthood. But, no! his weakness, or too indulgent spirit, or his overweening fondness for his children, caused him to neglect parental duty. He mildly reproved, but RESTRAINED THEM NOT! And what was the consequence? Terrible indeed! God's anger is kindled, and begins to burn fiercely against the household of this venerable, but unhappy old man! The first alarming intimation of coming wrath is made by a certain man of God, who, divinely commissioned, comes to Shiloh, and rings an awful peal in the ears of Eli, predicting heavy judgments just at hand. Shortly after this, the Lord appeared to Samuel, by night, and said unto him, "I

will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin I will also make an end; for I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever!" These were not vain words. At this time, there was war between the Philistines and the children of Israel. To encourage the latter, the Ark of God was carried from Shiloh into their camp. Hophni and Phinehas, as ministering priests, went along with it. When the ark was brought into the camp, all Israel gave a great shout; so that the earth rang again! When the Philistines heard the

shout, and understood the occasion thereof, they were much alarmed, and cried out, saying, "God is come into the camp! Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods which smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness!" Nevertheless they encouraged each other saying, "Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight."

And now the contending forces rush to battle! The clash of arms is heard; the earth is red with blood! Eli, all anxiety, is seated on an elevated seat, near the gate of the city, by the wayside, watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God. Suddenly a man of Benjamin is seen, coming in haste from the field of battle, with his clothes rent, and dust upon his head. "What is there done, my son?" cries the

trembling old man." Israel is fled!" says the messenger—"Israel is fled! There has been a great slaughter among the people; thy two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead; and the Ark of God is taken!" And when Eli heard these dreadful tidings, he fell from off the seat whereon he sat, backward, and his neck broke, and he died. The wife of Phinehas, too, not far off, hears the dismal tidings.—She gives a shriek! Premature pangs come upon her! She groans in agony;—calls the name of the child to which she gives birth, *Ichabod*—*glory departed*—and expires! O day of disaster! O scene of diversified woe! On yonder field of battle, lie two impious sons weltering in their gore! At the gate of the city, is seen the body of the old man, prostrate upon the ground, his silvery locks dishonoured in the dust! and not far off, a daughter-in-law, amid premature pangs, shrieks, groans and expires! And now,

over this scene of horror and accumulated woe, methinks the voice of an invisible one comes, thrilling through the air:” “For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

## 2. THE APPLICATION.

DOUBTLESS some of those who will read this little book are parents; and in many respects *good* parents; but it may be they are the Eli's of the present day. If so, let them think of the old man at Shiloh, and *take warning!*—O thou venerated father, whose eyes are upon this page—Have *you* sons? They love you, and you love them. This is all right. But some children are not angels. They are lovely, perhaps, but not perfect. Even in early life, they give proof of sad and deep de-

pravity. Evil passions and evil propensities sometimes spring up in the tenderest bosom, as prickly thorns, and noxious weeds, in the loveliest gardens. Do you know the temper and true character of *your* children? I have heard persons speaking of certain boys, say—"They are rude; they are vile; they are the worst boys in all the land!" and all this, perhaps, true; when the parent, under the influence of overweening love, was blind to the faults of his own child. So true it is that "charity covers a multitude of sins"—hides them from the view. Father, let me talk to you plainly, in this little tract. You are the natural guardian of your children. The mother, of course, shares with you in this responsibility, but you are emphatically the head of your family, and in the matters of command and restraint, God expects more from you, than from the other parent, and for this very reason, because you are

the head of the family, the chief source of power and authority. Hence God said of Abraham, even when Sarah his wife was yet alive, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. Your responsibility, then, venerated father, is very—*very* great, and if you neglect parental duty, if like Eli, you fail to exercise parental authority when that is needed, rest assured, sooner or later, in some form or other, you will learn, by sad experience, that the language addressed to Eli was not intended, altogether for him alone—"I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Mark the particular charge brought against this too indulgent parent. "His sons made themselves vile, AND HE RESTRAINED THEM NOT." Now, whilst I do not by any means

say that there are two distinct departments, one to be occupied by the one parent, and another, by the other, yet I do say that whilst it is the special duty of the mother to *instruct*, it is the special duty of the father to *restrain*. Proceeding upon this principle, let me mention some cases, in which the restraining power of a father should be brought to bear.

### 3. EVIL PASSIONS.

CERTAIN strong feelings of the soul, which form what is usually denominated a high temper, when properly governed are useful. They give promptness and energy to the character; but it must be remembered, that like the powerful element of *fire*, they are "good servants, but bad masters," and require to be watched and controlled; and this too in the beginning, for if unrestrained in the child, they are apt to "grow with

his growth, and strengthen with his strength." How often have I seen petted and spoiled children raging with angry passions, and even treating with indignity those who gave them birth! If ever the rod of correction should be used with calm but wholesome severity, this is the time; for violent passions indulged in have proved the ruin of thousands.—O how many hands have been stained with blood; how many families have been clothed in mourning; and how many poor souls have been sent unprepared to their last account, by reason of the indulgence of passions, which ought to have been controlled, but were not, in early life!—I could here tell a tale, that is enough to cause both the ears of every one that heareth thereof to tingle, and yet there was no murder committed, save in the heart. One of the ruling elders of my church, in a certain city, was as venerable and lovely a man as I ever knew. He had

a son, just ripening into manhood. This young man one night, being somewhat intoxicated, became angry with his venerable father; and seizing him by the hair of his head, dragged him to the window, in an upper room, and endeavoured to throw him down upon the pavement below! What a horrid act was this! But mark! the next morning when the fumes of wine were gone, what did he do? Was he overwhelmed with remorse and grief? Did he fall down upon his knees, and with tears of gushing sorrow, beg and entreat his father's forgiveness? Nothing like it! He added insult to injury; for when his father reminded him of his outrageous conduct the night before, he had the impudence to say, "Sir, it is your own fault; you ought to have restrained me when I was a child!" Parent, think upon these things, and begin early. When you see your children excited, calm them. When angry passions

are kindling, hold them in check. Add no fuel to the flame. Perfectly calm yourself, do not suffer them to use harsh language. Do not permit them even to speak loudly, for loud and vociferous language serves to increase passion, and in this way, some lash themselves into a fury. And, venerated father, beware especially, how by precept or example, you add to the violence of your child's passion. Some parents speak unguardedly, in the presence of their children. They are themselves excited; they are in a passion; and this is not concealed from the little one. This child thinks his father is the best man upon the earth, and everything that his father does must be right. O how important then, that he, whose influence for good or evil is so powerful, should be circumspect and guarded in everything! "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Some parents do it in this way. The child asks a question. It is a

proper question, but no answer is given. It is repeated, and repeated, and still repeated, and still no answer is given. I have oftentimes noticed such things, and have wondered how any kind father could thus treat an inquiring child. Moreover, some parents provoke their children by making certain uncalled for, and stinging remarks, and by holding them up to ridicule, in the presence of the whole family; and sometimes by injudiciously reproving them, in the presence of strangers. I recollect a case of the latter kind. A certain youth, about sixteen years of age, had done something which unquestionably deserved a severe rebuke. This rebuke was given, not privately, but in the presence of the whole family, and of strangers! I saw this dear youth, for he had some fine traits of character. I was present when he was thus cruelly held up as a spectacle of shame to all in the room. He said nothing, but I

saw the dark tempest sitting upon his brow. I could perceive that there was a whirlwind raging in his bosom. There were fires there, which would not soon be quenched. Poor young man! goaded by the severe and untimely rebuke of an injudicious father, I doubt not he wished himself dead! "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." You may restrain your children, but not insult them. I knew a little boy once, not perhaps turned of ten years of age, who, driven to desperation by some remark of his mother, too stinging to be borne, left the breakfast table, went up into the garret, got a rope, and hung himself! Paul says, "Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Even so, O thou parent, who wouldst curb the passions of thy

children, dost thou curb thine own? "A good example is the most powerful kind of preaching."

#### 4. TELLING FALSEHOODS.

No vice is more vile, or marks a more depraved heart than this, and yet some children seem to be strangely addicted to it, even when very young! Indeed, the Bible says: "the wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies!" Vile and abominable, however, as this vice is, some parents do not frown upon it as they should. Nay, some encourage it; not intentionally perhaps, but in this way: the child has told a story, and the parent smiles! and why? There was something, it may be, of smartness in it, and the parent is more pleased with the wit, than displeased with the sin! This is not all. The story is told to the

next neighbour, who steps in; who must also needs smile, of course, and say something complimentary about the "little rogue," and in his presence too! for, fear of displeasing the doating parent! Here is another case: the little child in its heedlessness breaks a plate; and the parent happening to be in an ill humour slaps the child. The next day, to conceal something that it has done, the child tells a positive untruth, a downright lie, and the parent being a little busy, or in a better humour than common, passes over this matter very lightly! What is the result? The child comes to the conclusion that it is a more serious affair to break a plate, than to tell a lie! Take another case. The father mounts his horse, and is going to town. His little son wants to go with him, begs hard, and is refused. To quiet the child, however, the father promises to bring him home a little drum. The child is content; but its thoughts are

about the promised toy, all the day long. The evening comes, the little boy sees his father in the distance, and elated with hope, runs to meet him, Pa, where is my drum? There is no drum! The father through forgetfulness, has broken his promise, and seems to care not much about the matter! O sad! It would seem that in the estimation of this parent, truth is not a very sacred thing after all!

#### 5. THE STONE WALL

THE father of the celebrated Charles J. Fox, had within his inclosure an old stone wall. Having mentioned on a certain occasion in the presence of his little boy, that he intended to have it blown up with powder, his little son exacted a promise that he should be present to see it. But on a certain day the wall was blown up, and little Charles Fox was not there. The disap-

pointment was cruel, and he ventured to expostulate with his father. "Pa," said he, "didn't you promise that I should be present?" The good old man immediately sent for masons, had the wall repaired, and then, whilst his son was looking on, had it blown up again! This was right. A promise made to a child should never be broken. Again, some parents encourage lying in this way: The child is sick, a certain medicine is nauseous, but it must be taken. It is called sugar! The child remembers this deception a long time. Take another case: Some parents direct their servants to say that they are not at home, when at home they really are, and some will profess to be much pleased to be called upon by a certain person; and when that person has retired, they change their notes and speak of him in a very different way. These things are all noticed by the children. Ah! little do such parents think what evil

they are doing to their own offspring! Little do they think how they are watering the seeds of sin! How they are nourishing a germ which has within it, poison and death! Parent, remember: truth, like the name of the ever blessed God, is most sacred, and must in no form or fashion be trifled with! If your children tell lies, you know your duty—restrain them.

#### 6. PROFANE SWEARING.

THERE is something so unnatural and daring in this vice, that children are not so apt to fall into this, as some others. And yet there are boys, even little boys, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness! Young and tender as they are, their unhallowed lips blaspheme the God who made them, and pour curses on all around! And shall I say it? Some parents have even taught their children to swear, actually

putting words of profaneness in their mouths! and when these words were repeated by their little ones, would laugh, as though it were something very smart! I knew a little boy once, about three years of age, thus taught by his grandfather! Yes, it was not enough for this old man to teach his little grandson to scold his mother, and shake his fist in her face; but he would teach him to curse her! all in sport to be sure. But it was a lesson of profaneness. It was soon learned. In a little while that child could swear to his grandfather's full content. And sad to tell, this little swearer was laid in his grave when scarcely turned of four years of age! Such parents are monsters in human shape, and stand fair candidates for companionship with those foul spirits, who, in the world of woe, blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains, and repent not. But there are some parents, who if they do not teach their child-

ren profaneness by precept, do it as effectually by their example. They will swear in the presence of their children! Surely, thinks the child, it must be right, it must be manly; or my father would not swear. Parent! remember, your example is powerful. Some parents will permit their children to swear in their presence. How disrespectful this is! But others, although they will not permit their children to swear in their presence, yet care very little what language they use when absent; and even when told that their children are profane, take no notice of it! Such parents certainly stand guilty before God. Eli was probably not an eyewitness of his sons' immoralities, but he was not ignorant of them, and yet restrained them not; and hence the heavy judgments which came upon him and his house. Profane swearing is a vice, alas! but too common in our day, and yet certainly it makes one

vile. It is a breach of all the rules of true politeness, for it marks a great want of respect for the feelings of those around. Suppose I was in the habit of chewing assafoetida; would it not be rather impolite to carry that habit with me into company? But this might not be more offensive to you, than your profane swearing is to me. Moreover, profane swearing makes a man vile, for it assimilates him to those who are the most vile and degraded of our race; for who, I ask, are usually more profane, than gamblers, and pirates, and liars and drunkards? Another idea is this; profane swearing makes a man cheap, even in the devil's account. At least, so thought an old writer, who thus remarked: "The devil sometimes turns fisherman. When he fishes for ordinary sinners, he baits his hook with the riches of the world, and the honours of the world, and the pleasures of the world; but when he fishes for profane swearers, he

throws them the naked hook, and they bite at the naked hook. When children swear, ah me! methinks God Almighty frowns, guardian angels blush, and the recording spirit sighs, as he writes it against them in the volumes of eternity. Venerated father! these things being so, can you be indifferent when your children are becoming profane? O no! if you do not attend to the matter, who will? You know your duty, restrain them.

#### 7. BAD COMPANY.

“EVIL communications corrupt good manners,” says Paul, and an old writer remarks that “Those who go much into bad company, are like those who go much into the sun; they soon get tanned!” And all this is true, for firm indeed must be that heart which can withstand perpetual tempta-

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tions, and strong those principles which can resist continual assaults, and hence that saying universally admitted to be true, that "a man is known by the company he keeps." Even individuals ripe in age and experience are sometimes seriously injured in this way, and what then can we expect from an inexperienced youth, or a tender child? Solomon knew well the danger of such associations, and therefore said, My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Walk not thou in the way with them. Refrain thy foot from their path. Yes, parent, let your son have nothing to do with them. Better it is for a child to have no companion at all, than to have those that are vile and corrupting. How many youths of fair character and pleasing prospects have been ruined in this way! and even some of those who are still the ornaments of society, are ready to say, "Bad companions once very nearly ruined me!

O if it had not been for that sudden death, which roused me; or that awakening sermon, or that alarming providence, or that severe affliction, or that faithful friend, or that letter, or that charge of my dying father or mother, I would certainly have been ruined, for I was in the paths of the destroyer. My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped! Blessed be God, who has not given my soul over as a prey to destruction. My soul is delivered as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. The snare is broken, and I am escaped. Parent, think well upon this subject. Guard the morals of your children. Find out especially what places they frequent at night, and who are their associates. See to it, that they be the virtuous and the good, and not the vicious and the vile. If they prefer the company of the latter, talk kindly to them. Reason the matter well. But if they persist, remember the case of

Eli. You know your responsibility. Exert your authority, and restrain them.

### 8. THE SABBATH.

“REMEMBER the Sabbath day to keep it holy!” This is the command of the eternal God. It was thundered out from Sinai. It was recorded on a table of stone. It has never been abolished, and therefore it is binding now; and yet there are many Sabbath-breakers in our land. One reason is, they in childhood were not taught properly to respect the day. This is a sore evil under the sun, for the Sabbath was made for man, designed to promote his best interests, both temporal and spiritual; and he who tramples upon the Sabbath, wrongs his own soul. Relax the obligations of the Sabbath, and you strike a blow at the good order of society. Abolish the Sabbath, and you ruin the world; for the Sabbath is one

of the principal safeguards of virtue; and, "No Sabbath, no religion!" For the correctness of this, I would refer to the statement of Sir Matthew Hale, that nearly all of those upon whom he had been called to pronounce sentence of death, confessed that their career of depravity and crime commenced in a desecration of the Sabbath. And may I not here, with great propriety, also refer to the moral condition of France, at that period when the Sabbath was abolished? Infidelity with its associates, crime and misery, reigned supreme. O what a king, and what a reign! Its crown was terror, its throne the guillotine, its sceptre the battle-axe, its palace-yard was a field of blood; and its royal robes dripped with human gore! All France was, as it were, one vast slaughter-house, and the rulers of France were as demons from the pit! Father, if you wish your children well, teach them to respect the Sab-

bath, and see to it that you respect it yourself, for a good example is the most effective kind of preaching. And here I must say that some parents professedly pious, are strangely loose in the observance of the Sabbath, without the plea either of necessity or mercy. They will travel on the Sabbath, will visit, will talk on all subjects, will read political papers, will write business letters, and will do almost anything that may be done on another day. No wonder that their children grow up without any proper respect for God's holy day. Parent! believe me, this is an important matter. Due attention to this, will do much to form and stamp the character of your children, both for time and eternity! Be persuaded then to teach your children, both by precept and example, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. But I must now bring this address to a close. Permit me to present a few motives to stir

you up to the proper discharge of parental duty.

1. Remember the case of Eli; remember the sorrows which came upon him, and the thrilling language of the eternal God: "I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

2. Remember that your own children are your own peculiar charge, and if you do not take an interest in forming their moral and religious character, who will? Much will depend upon you, whether they be an ornament or disgrace to society, whether they be angels of light, or spirits damned?

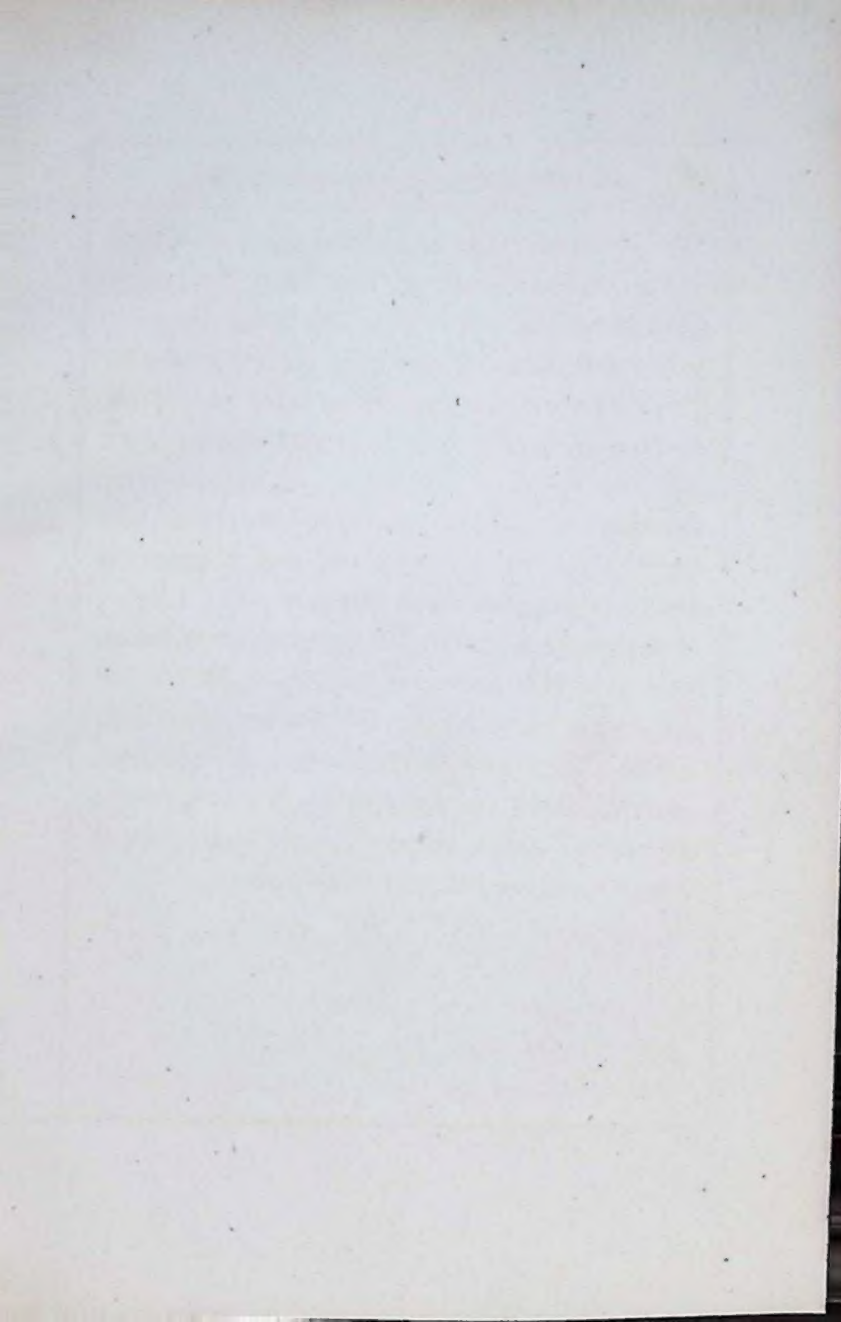
3. Remember also that your own happiness is much concerned in this matter. "A wise son," says Solomon, "maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." When children turn out well, the parents feel richly rewarded; but when

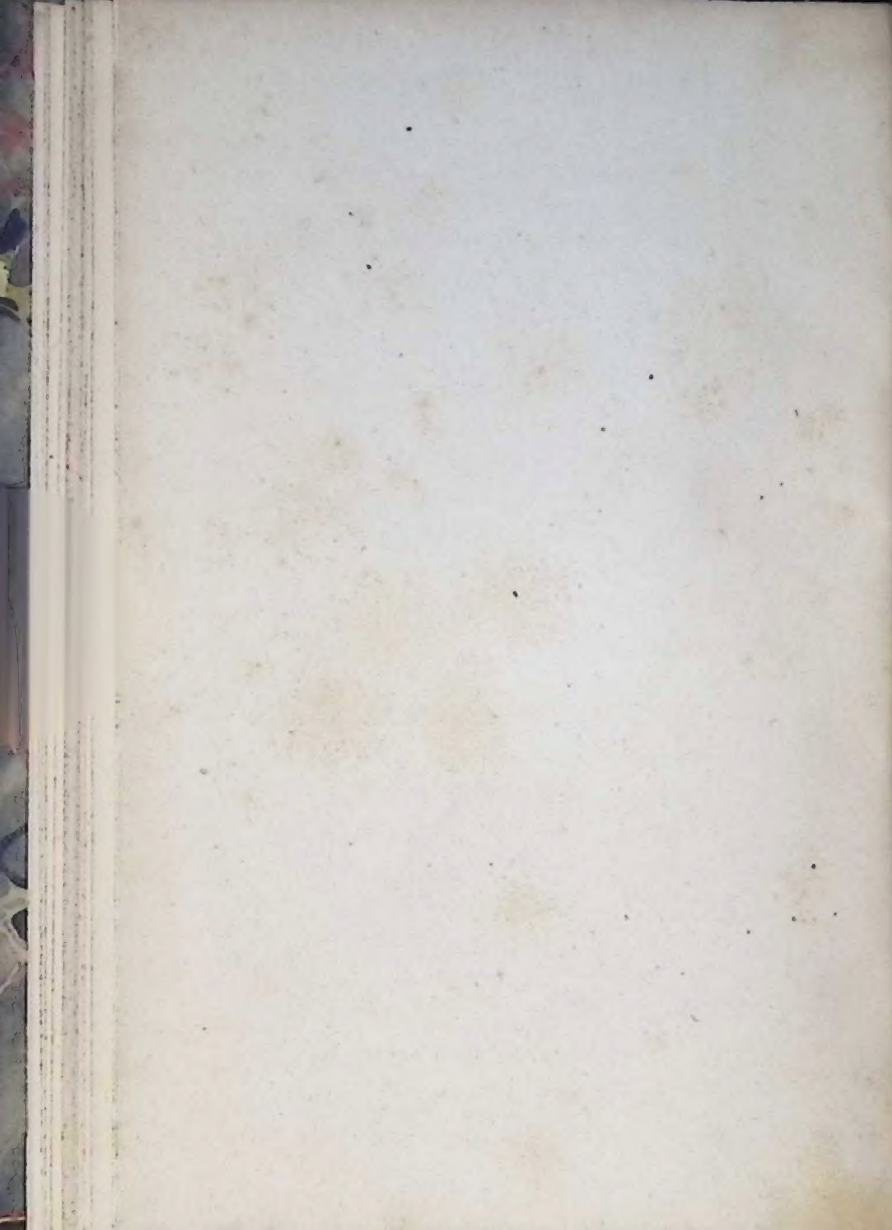
the reverse, then comes affliction which enters the very soul! It is remarkable, that those children who have been properly governed, respect and love their parents to their dying day; but those who have been humoured and spoiled, and who have grown up without due restraint, are almost sure to become void of natural affection, and usually prove no comfort, but a grief to those who gave them birth.

Respected parent! let not your children rule you, but do you rule them. Strive not to make them rich, but rather strive to make them enlightened, and industrious, and virtuous, and happy. So act, as to command their respect, and secure their love. I close all with this charge.

“Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

THE END.





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